SOLOMONS

The magazine of Solomon Airlines

Number 1 1990

Life on the LAGOON

Farms for the future

JAPANESE back for dead

POHA: a cave of life

That agency on the hill

KAUSIMAE: man of world

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Solomons

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Cover

A boy. A canoe. Sunshine. Calm waters. It's just another day on Langa Langa Lagoon, Malaita. Photo: Mike McCoy.

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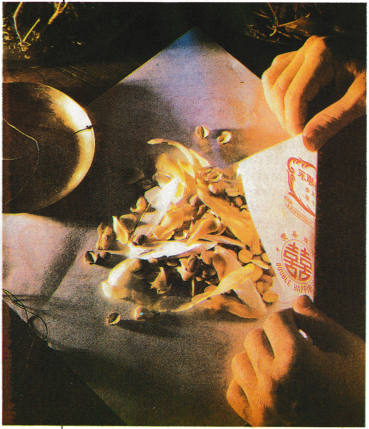
Hong Kong. It's about ancient customs and modern values.



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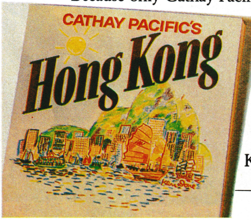

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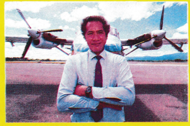

The response to **"Solomons"** has been most gratifying, considering this new project of spreading our country and airline image far and wide.

Since taking the 'Helm' of Solomon Airlines I have personally found a new challenge in the trust enshrined in my appointment with a new board. It is an encouraging sign of change as we approach a turning point of tourism in Solomon Islands.

Our islands lend themselves to the discerning visitor and features in this issue should make interesting reading.

Gud lake an enjoem flaet bilong iu.

—Brown Saua, chairman of board

The Pacific connection

Air Pacific has for many years been the catalyst in providing what could only be referred to as an essential air service for the people and businesses of the Solomon Islands.

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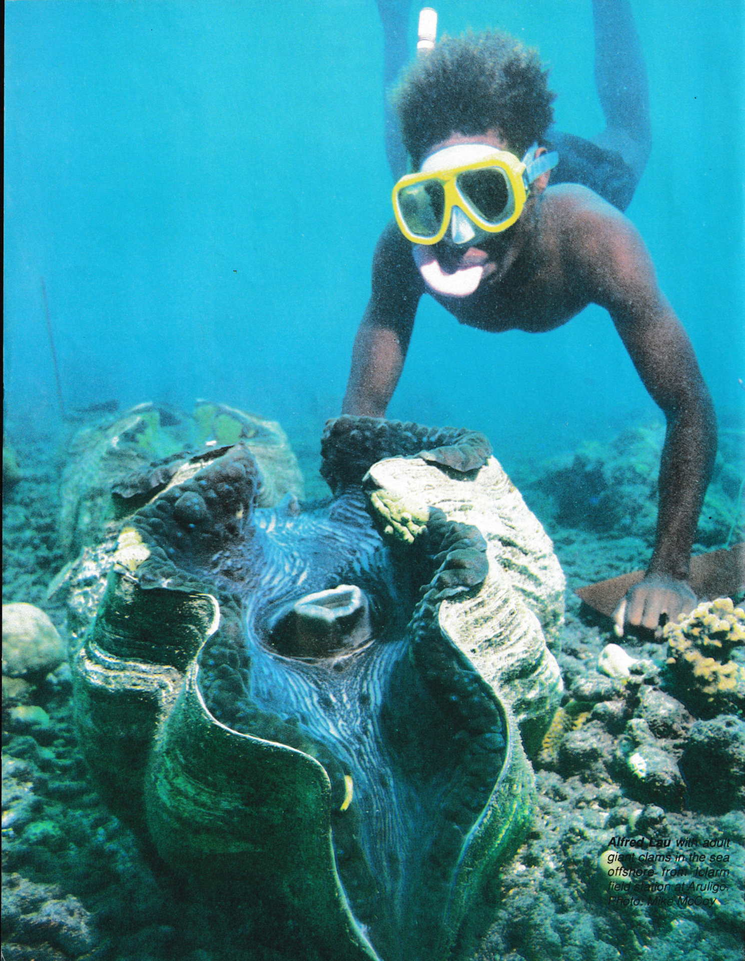

***Alfred Lau** with adult giant clams in the sea offshore from Iclarm field station at Aruligo. Photo: Mike McCoy*

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***ICLARM** research centre near Honiara ... behind this gate, a new type of farming*

FARMS for the FUTURE

On the coast road west of Honiara, an international team of scientists is working to develop a remarkable new type of farming. Robert Keith-Reid reports:

Beef farming can make good money. So can the raising of pigs, sheep, and poultry. But international research conducted in the Solomon Islands could one day produce a different, much more efficient and productive kind of livestock farmers raising livestock on a steady diet of not much more than sunlight. The livestock won't

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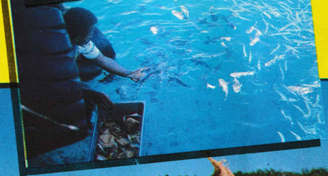

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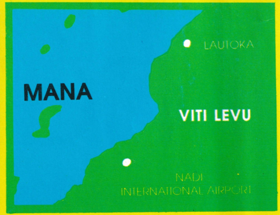

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Workers *measure juvenile clams*

be any four-legged species, or a two-legged one. It doesn't have any legs at all except for a muscle which, at an early microscopic stage of its life, it uses to shift a short distance. Then it settles for life, to grow for 30, 40, 50 or more years into a 200-kilo or more monster that four strong men have difficulty shifting. This creature is the giant clam, and in particular the biggest of the species, *Tridacna gigas*.

Twenty-two kilometres along the coast road west of Honiara an international scientific team is probing the mysteries of this remarkable creature. The aim is to prove the possibility of rearing clams as a big money earner for the tropical island waters in whose warm, clear reef waters they thrive. If they achieve this, scientists of the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM) will also be probably be saving the clam from the danger of extinction.

Shrinking stocks

Thrive? That's not quite the right term to use. For the giant clam, and *Tridacna gigas* in particular, is under attack. Raids by roving Asian clam boats have within the past 20 years driven T.gigas (as scientists call it, for short) to extinction in New Caledonia and Fiji, the Marianas, Guam, and most parts of Indonesia. Its world is fast contracting since the boundary of the area of its habitat has only extended as far west as Malaysia, as far east as Fiji and Tonga, as far north as the Philippines and as far south as Tonga and New Caledonia. The shrinking of stocks of T.gigas and two other smaller species of commercial value, *Tridacna derasa* and *Hippopus hippopus*, may partly be due to climatic changes or for other ecological reasons. But there's little doubt that the main cause of their demise is, to put it politely, "overfishing" or, as most Pacific Islanders now regard it, poaching by Asian fishermen.

Chinese cooking

For the purpose of Chinese cooking, a kilo of processed adductor muscle of the giant clam can fetch $S200. In its raw frozen state it will certainly fetch $40 or $60 a kilo. A cargo of 10 tonnes can fetch a couple of hundred thousand dollars. And the muscle, which accounts for only 10 percent of the weight of an adult clam, is all those Chinese cooks want. So this is all the poachers take, even though all other parts of clam, except the kidney, are edible. Pacific Islanders have eaten clams as part of their natural daily diet for centuries. Proof of this lies in the huge piles of clam shells excavated by archaeologists from abandoned village settlements in many parts of the region. But it is only in recent years that scientists have woken up to some facts that have brought T.gigas and some its cousins under close attention. Firstly, putting it rather simply, compared with creatures that grunt, moo, or cluck, a giant clam can from a small area and practically no input yield more meat in a shorter time than anything else.

One set of figures is that in five years, from microscopic dot size, a clam farm could be yielding up to 218 tonnes of flesh per hectare a year. All that a happy clam needs are: the space covered by its shell (T.gigas can easily grow to the width of a metre or more); a flow of clean seawater; protection in their young days (when they are the size of a 20-cent coin) from predators including fish and a mean, creeping sea snail; and lots of sunlight. Because the other curious thing about clams is that they are phototropic. The rays of the sun falling on their flesh as they lie in shallow reef water with their great shells agape triggers chemical processes that give the creature nourishment. An algae called *zooxanthellae* give the clams enough photosynthetic substances to meet their basic nutritional needs. There is no need for external sources of food. In effect, a giant clam farmer wouldn't need to feed his stock anything but sunlight. The giant clam is the world's only potential farm animal which is self feeding.

Islanders have eaten clams ... for centuries

ICLARM is an international non-profit research organisation dedicated to solving the problem of the side use of marine resources. Its Solomon Islands research station was established in co-operation with the government." This is the largest and best supported facility in the Pacific in terms of physical size," said its director, Dr John Munro. Opened in April 1988 at an initial cost of more than $S400,000, in co-operation with research stations elsewhere in the south-west Pacific it is playing a lead role in the art of encouraging giant clams to breed in tanks. In a bit over a year, it is rearing clams to a size at which

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Adult *clams in tank west of Honiara*

they can be released to clam farmers.

With its great area of reefs and lagoons and now with fisheries patrols begun by a protective government, the Solomon Islands is still a haven for T. gigas and its cousins. This is one reason why ICLARM chose the country as a research ground since it could be sure of collecting adult clams as brood stock from Ysabel and the Marovo Lagoon of New Georgia. These were transported to the research centre in mid-1987 and placed in shallow fibreglass tanks through which fresh, clean seawater is kept circulating. Clams are hermaphrodites — they are both male and female. In its natural condition, on a reef, a clam will discharge millions of eggs. As these drift away other clams pick up chemical signals which active them to discharge sperms. The fertilised eggs settle as invisible larvae in the reef habitat. During the first few months of its life the baby clam is highly vulnerable to predators or it may simply be swept out to sea away from the reef environment necessary for its survival. Of those millions of larvae, few survive to become 200-kilo giants.

At the research station, work is focussed on creating an environment in which the invisible larvae can grow in security. As they evolve from invisibility to become tiny one to two centimetre creatures, and then five centimetres,10 centimetres and 15 centimetres shellfish, they move progressively through a series of tanks and trays and then into wire cages intended to protect them from predators. It looks as if T.gigas could reach marketable size in as little as five to six years. Thinking is that at their most vulnerable stage young clams can be distributed to clam farmers to raise in submerged baskets or simply inside pens on a reef until they reach harvesting size. A dozen Solomon Islands villages are now taking part in trials at locations in Guadalcanal, Nggela, Malaita, Isabel and in Western Province.

Exports

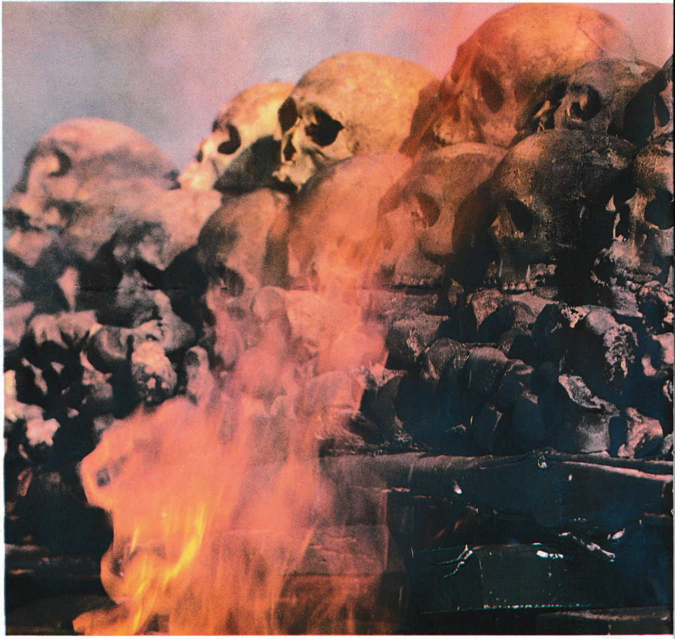
Cages holding from 200 to 500 baby clams are placed in sheltered reef areas. Villagers care for the clams by keeping the cages clean and free of killer snails. So far results are encouraging and the experimental village farmers are enthusiastic. After two years the clams will be transferred from cages to reefs in the open sea and harvested for export to south-east Asia after four or five years. A 50-centimetre T.gigas weighs about 30 kilos, of which 0.6 kilos will be adductor muscle, 6.3 kilos other flesh and 23 kilos shell that can be used for several purposes. A 100-centimetre clam will weight about 280 kilos. Dr Munro said the research station's work had run with "remarkably few" difficulties. "The biggest technical problem is survivability of baby clams. We need to improve this. Once we can put them out in the ocean the problems are very minor."

Experimental village farmers are enthusiastic

Eventually the Solomon Islands and its neighbours could be earning millions of dollars from big giant-clam farms. Some countries have already asked the Solomons for stock, but Dr Munro said that requests from places like French Polynesia, where T.gigas have not existed naturally, need to be treated with great caution. "It is hard to imagine a clam going on the rampage, but you might introduce bad bugs into fresh environment. We have told French Polynesia that at this stage 'no' because we don't know what the bugs could be." Very large harvests of clams from small areas appear to be possible, since six clams of 37-43 centimetres can be raised in just a square metre of space.

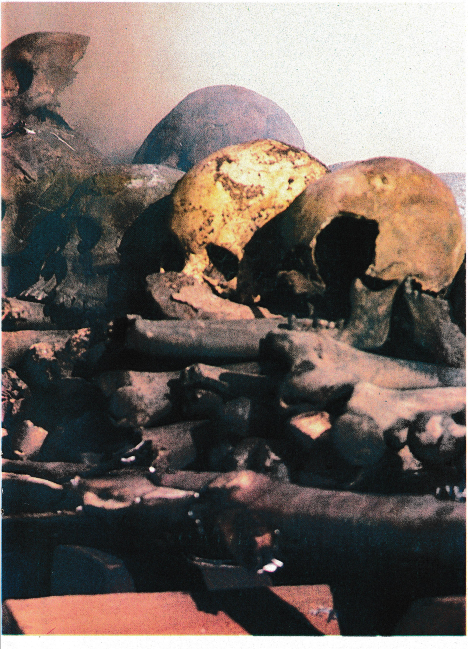
ICLARM welcomes visitors. Recently, at its entrance, it opened a specially-constructed pavilion in which its work is explained. Eventually the research station will become a clam-breeding farm supplying hundreds of thousands of clams a year to farmers not only of the Solomon Islands but throughout the South Pacific. The biggest specimen of T.gigas recorded is a 1.4-metre monster from New Caledonia whose shells now form the font in a Paris church. What about those stories of unwary reef walker being caught by the grip of a clam to be trapped by the rising tide and drowned? Just stories. Impressive as he/she looks, T.gigas has an obviously delicate interior. A wriggling foot is the last thing it would clam up on and digest. ■

Back for



The *bones were placed on tiers of wood and cremated on the beach at the mouth of Alligator Creek.*

the dead



Hundreds of men of Ichiki force died and were left behind at Alligator Creek, near Henderson airport. But the Japanese did not forget those who fell.

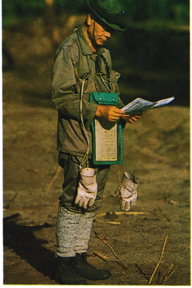
Words and photos: Mike McCoy

In the early days of the Guadalcanal Campaign — the bitter six-month struggle between United States and Japanese forces in the Solomon Islands during the Second World War — Japanese troops tried to storm United States positions near the strategic Henderson Airfield. This large force was known as the Ichiki Force, after its commanding officer, Colonel Kiyono Ichiki. On August 21, 1942, wave after wave of Ichiki's troops made suicidal charges against United States machineguns near the mouth of Alligator Creek. After the battle there were only some 130 survivors of the original 800 of the Ichiki Force. The corpses of the rest littered the beach and blocked the mouth of the sluggish creek. Colonel Ichiki himself committed suicide. Later that day the United States Marines bulldozed the more than 600 Japanese corpses into a common grave on the beach on the eastern bank of Alligator Creek.

More than 40 years later, on 25 September 1985, the skeletal remains of many of these soldiers were unearthed by a team of Japanese who had come to search for their war dead. The 26-member team, sponsored by the Japanese Government, consisted of seven

Guadalcanal veterans — four of whom had served on the Ichiki Force — four government officials and a mixed group of volunteers and relatives of those who had perished on Guadalcanal. The leader was Tatsuro Takagi, 50, an official of the Ministry of Health and Welfare in Tokyo.

The site of the mass grave had been pinpointed by a Mr Okada. He had served with Ichiki and had revisited the Alligator Creek area in 1982. On his return to Japan he informed the War Graves Commission that he was confident of locating the grave. His memory had served him well and he was there when the grave was uncovered with the aid of a mechanical ditch digger and a group of Solomon Islanders employed as diggers. The site was only some 75 metres from the sea and the rising tides filled the two-metre deep excavation as Japanese and Solomon Islanders groped in the muddy water. They unearthed not only human bones but also the associated paraphernalia of war — rifles, a pistol, ammunition, bayonets, helmets, gas masks, boots, and an occasional identification tag. Many personal effects also came to light — wallets, cigarette cases and lighters, fountain pens and watches.



***A simple** Buddhist ceremony took place at the cremation of the bones.*

The bones were collected in plastic buckets, washed and left to dry in the sun on the beach. More than 50 intact skulls were collected in addition to a large amount of bones and bone fragments. In the early morning of 27 September these bones were cremated beside the grave in a simple Buddhist ceremony. The ashes were gathered later in the day for packing and shipping to Japan where it was intended that they be deposited in a war cemetery in Tokyo.

Perhaps the most notable of the Japanese team was Takemori Ichiki, the son of Colonel Kiyono Ichiki. Now an officer in the Japanese navy, the younger Ichiki had been a schoolboy when his father had died. Masami Hori, 48, was making his third trip to Guadalcanal to search for the remains of his father. Hori's father had been killed on Mount Austen, some five kilometres inland from Alligator Creek. Searching through human remains found on Mount Austen, Hori felt he may have been successful in his quest. On this trip he had located a skull whose dental pattern — particularly the gold crowns — closely matched that of his father.

From Guadalcanal the Japanese team flew back to Tokyo — with brief stopovers at other World War Two sites — Rabaul and Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea and also Manila. It is likely that others will come back to look for Japanese war dead on Guadalcanal — more than 20,000 Japanese died on the island and the remains of the majority have yet to be found.

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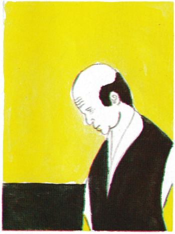

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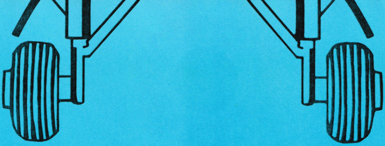

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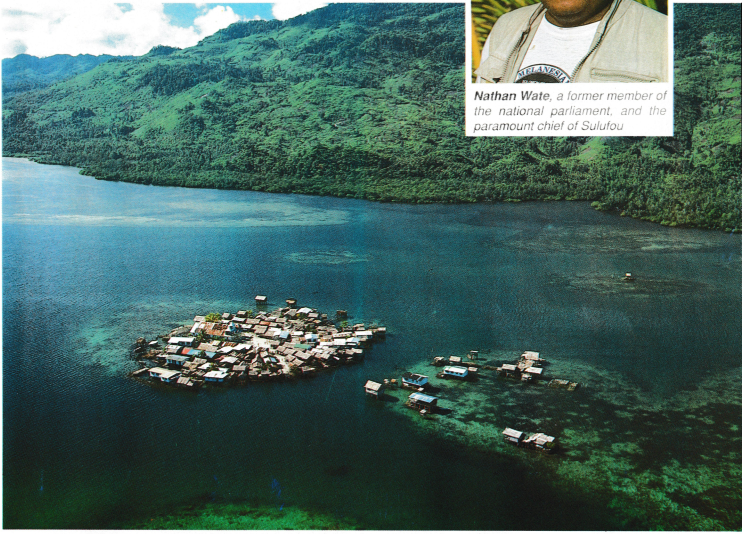
Nathan Wate, *a former member of the national parliament, and the paramount chief of Sulufou*

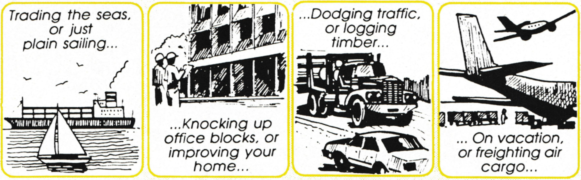


Sulufou Island

SUPERB Sulufou

- Excerpted from a book by Mike McCoy, *Portraits of Melanesia*, to be published by Crawford House Press (Australia) early in 1990.

Paul Orudiana is a very old man. He recites for me, from memory, the genealogy of the Sulufou people, some 28 generations. Not only the direct lineage, but also the brothers and sisters. Sulufou is the largest and oldest of the man-made islands of Lau Lagoon at



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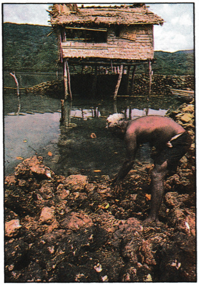


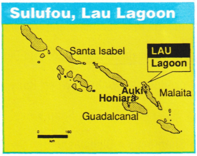
Adding *to the seawall*

Traditional *dance on Liunasi, an artificial island neighbouring Sulufou*

the island of Malaita. Construction of the island probably started five centuries ago, its foundations laid before Columbus reached the New World.

The Lau people, the to'o i asi — saltwater dwellers. I've known many of these Sulufou people for the best part of two decades. Although it has been almost 10 years since I was last on the island I'm greeted by so many familiar faces. "Michaelo, Michaelo", they call, the consonant ending of my name awkward on their tongues. The children quickly sense the familiarity of the adults and there is not the reserve that strangers are often met with in Malaitan villages. Davy is from the opposite coast; he is initially shy amongst these Lau people, his reticence a psychological vestige of the past when to venture uninvited into the domain of another tribe could mean death.

Jack Renton was an exception. More than a hundred years ago, as a young English castaway, he lived on the island for seven years., His story is a poignant one, a man struggling to adapt to a culture vastly different to his own. His memory is still very much alive on Sulufou. They tell me of his words, his deeds, of his relationships with his woman, Bori, and with Kabau, the adopted father. I have a photograph of Renton and I show it to a gathering of the older people and for a moment they are speechless. Then an old woman reaches out, her tired, gnarled old fingers gently caressing the photograph with a tenderness that could not be more real had she been touching the face of a living man. "Oh Jackie" she softly whispers, and I am moved almost to tears.



Sulufou, Lau Lagoon

There are a lot of kids on Sulufou, noisy and exuberant. And on nights when the moon is full over the lagoon they go wild. It is after midnight and the narrow alleys between the rows of houses ring with the peals of childhood's laughter and squeals of pandemonium. The soft pounding of small feet on the coral sand, the play of light and shadow across the thatched walls as a young girl hurries past carrying a kerosene lantern. A chorus of raucous laughter comes from one house. Further away, muted by distance, someone plays a guitar, accompanied by the distinctive sing-song cadences of Lau voices.

The storm

Earlier in the night I'd sat in the village church listening to a small choir at practice. Faces gilded by lampglow, an old woman peers myopically through thick glasses as she struggles to follow the verses in her hymn book. A younger woman cradles her sleeping baby in the crook of her arm, her singing failing to rouse it. The choirmaster beats the time on the cover of his hymn book with a wooden school ruler — he knows the words by heart. They sing beautifully, their voices swell with confidence and fill the still air within the church and the sense of utter tranquillity is pervasive.

The storm hits at daybreak. No cockcrow this morning, the crack of thunder, very close. Shrieking wind — it must be gusting 40 or 50 knots and the rain — solid, silver-grey — is a horizontal streaming wall. Disconcerting to be woken like this, disorienting. Everything is wet. Gaps in the walling vaporise the rain and the house fills with a chill mist. Davy and Siolo climb up into the rafters, the rest of us huddle in a corner, speculating on cyclones and ruined plans for the day. It passes, over the lagoon and into the mountains on the mainland, leaving transient, fragmented wisps of vapour in the valleys.

The rain has turned the ground at Urutau to mud. This is the Saturday morning market, the traditional food exchange between the people of the bush and the sea. Fish are traded for root crops. I'm an object of curiosity to the bush people. As I photograph one of the men, red hibiscus in his hair, he turns on me, raising his bush knife in a menacing gesture. The delighted crowd urges him on. "Hem nao, kilim disfala araikwao!" But the laughter in his eyes belies the intent of his actions. The civilizing effect of generations of contact with a wider world has softened the old xenophobic belligerence into a humorous parody, a playful pantomime of the past. ■

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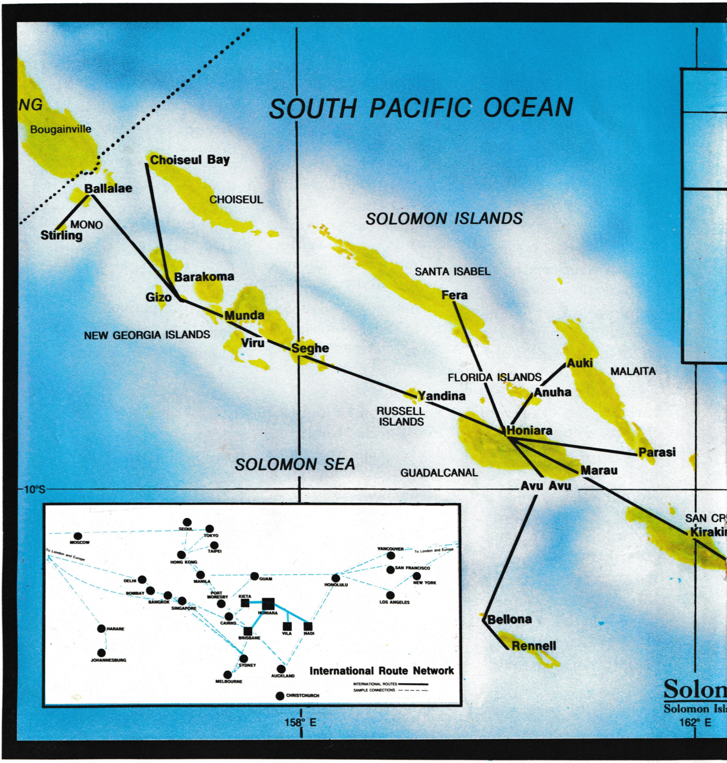
SOLOMON ISLANDS

Your information guide

- **Climate:** Tropically warm and humid with coastal day temperatures averaging 28C. April to November tends to be drier, and November to April wetter.
- **What To Wear:** Light and casual. Keep brief beach wear for beaches.
- **Immigration:** Commonwealth, United States, and most West European visitors do not need holiday visas but need return or onward tickets. People intending to work must have a work permit.
- **Honiara:** The capital is eight kilometres from Henderson International Airport.
- **Airport Tax:** $S20 payable by passengers boarding international flights.
- **Health:** Malaria is a problem. Take anti-malarial medication a week before arrival, once a week during your stay, and for four weeks after departure. Consult your chemist or doctor about an appropriate brand or tablet. Maloprin is usually recommended.
- **Currency:** $20, $10, $5, and $2 Solomon Islands notes; coins are $1, 50c, 20c, 10c, 5c, 2c, 1c.
- **Business Hours:** Government and some business offices Monday to Friday 8am to 4.30pm with a one-hour lunch break normally beginning at noon. Shops and some offices open Saturdays 8am - noon.
- **Banks:** National Bank of Solomon Islands, ANZ Banking Group, Westpac, Mondays to Fridays, 9am to 3pm.
- **Tipping:** Not expected and not encouraged.
- **Transport:** Taxis and buses in Honiara. Rental cars: Avis and Budget. International air: Air Niugini, Air Pacific, Solomon Airlines serve Henderson Airport. Domestic: Solomon Airlines operates to 23 destinations.
- **Electricity:** 240 volts in Honiara and some outer island centres.
- **Radio:** The Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation broadcasts daily in English and Pidgin. No television.
- **Newspapers:** Weeklies, Solomon Star, Solomon Toktok.
- **Honiara activities:** Golf, tennis, scuba diving, walks, battlefield tours, swimming, sailing, and fishing.

The world of So

Domestic routes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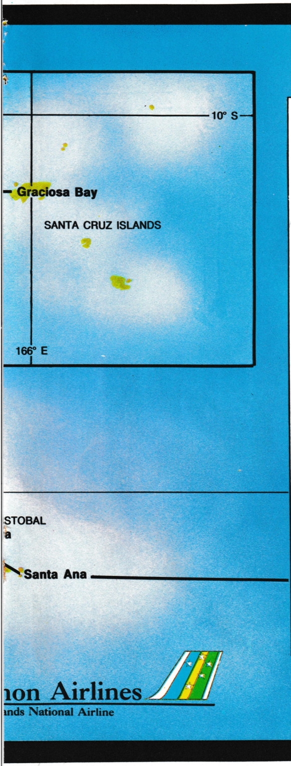
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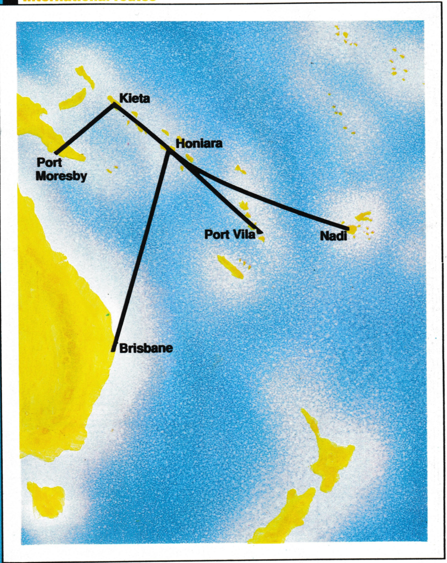
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Perth	9
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Antwerp	31
Brussels	2
BERMUDA	1
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BOTSWANA	267
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Brasilia	61
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Nuremburg	911
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Tralee	66
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Curacao	9
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NEW ZEALAND	64
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SWEDEN	46
Stockholm	8
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TAIWAN	886
Taipei	2
TANZANIA	255
Dar Es Salaam	51
THAILAND	66
Bangkok	2
THE GAMBIA ★	220
TONGA ★	676
TORTOLA	
All areas.	80949
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	1
All areas	809
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Tunis	1
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San Francisco	415
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Leningrad	812
Moscow	095
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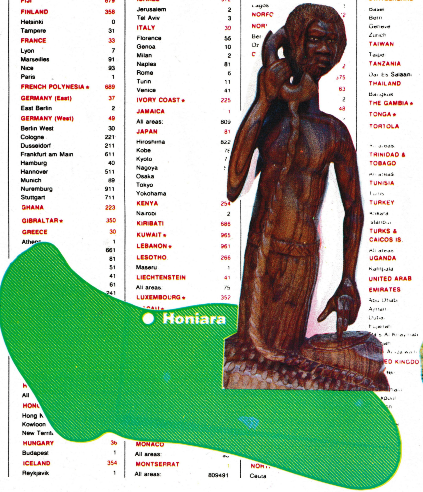
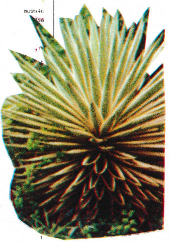
VENEZUELA	58
Caracas	2
YUGOSLAVIA	38
Beograd (Belgrade)	11
Sarajevo	71
Zagreb	41
ZAMBIA	260
Lusaka	1





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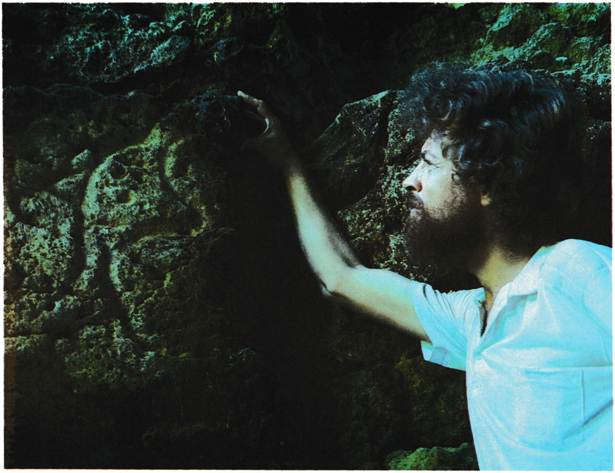
Cave of life



Archaeologist *David Roe works in Poha Cave*

Nearly 3000 years ago early settlers began leaving a message on the walls of a cave at Poha. Today it is providing archaeologists clues to the history of the Solomon Islands

Just six kilometres west of the Solomons capital, Honiara, at the base of a 100-metre limestone cliff, you can view the contents of one of the oldest known Pacific Islands art galleries. About 3000 years ago early Melanesian settlers of Guadalcanal began chipping away at the walls and roof of the Poha Cave. Over the centuries they engraved circles, zig-zag lines, a host of geometric forms and designs that probably repre-

'It is the only site in Melanesia where rock art can be directly dated'

sent fish and human heads or skulls. Carvings cover the cave walls and roof of the 10 metres deep by six metres wide cave. More, mainly depicting canoes, can be found on river boulders scattered along the valley in which cave is.

"It is the only site in Melanesia where rock art can be directly dated," says David Roe, of the department of prehistory at the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra. "The carvings on the back wall are at least 2900 years old. We have evidence of earlier settlement from the site and the engravings could be much earlier. But we think they are associated with the same general group of people responsible for the lapita pottery found throughout island Melanesia and large parts of Polynesia. What is interesting about the cave is that no pottery of any type has been found there. It looks like we're dealing with a rather different history in the Central Solomons than the Western Solomons or the south-eastern Solomons." What do the carvings means, if anything? "They obviously mean something," says Roe," but I'm not going to make any guesses because I don't think we will ever know. What we can say is that the carvings at the cave and other sites in the valley are obviously closely related in form and style to other rock art sites from the Bismarck archipelago to New Caledonia. Indeed many of the designs are absolutely identical."

The owners of the cave area have a different name for it: Vatuluma Posovi. Posovi is the name of a local folk hero and Vatuluma deriving from "vatu", meaning stone, and "luma" meaning a single men's house. The cave has been a working ground for archaeologists for nearly 25 years. William Davenport, of the University of Pennsylvania, worked there in 1966 and two officials of the former British colonial administration, Tom Russell and Jim Tedder, undertook major work there in 1967 and 1968, excavating most of the archaeological deposit. The archaeological remains had been badly disturbed by events in the Second World War. "A Japanese sniper had used the cave and the attacking Americans caused a lot of damage to the cliff face, where you can see bullet and shell holes," says Roe. "One of the first finds from Davenport's excavations was a leather wallet containing the pictures of two Japanese children — presumably the sniper's."

Four burials

Roe, an archaeologist specialising in Melanesian pre-history, went to Honiara in 1978 to work for the Solomon Islands National Museum and later for the Guadalcanal provincial government. He became interested in the cave when, in 1981, the issue of protection for historic sites arose as the government began examining the feasibility of using stone from the Poha valley in building a hydro-electric power dam in the Lunga Valley. Compared with other sites of

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Roe's work ... uncovered deposits...laid down as much as 6000 years ago

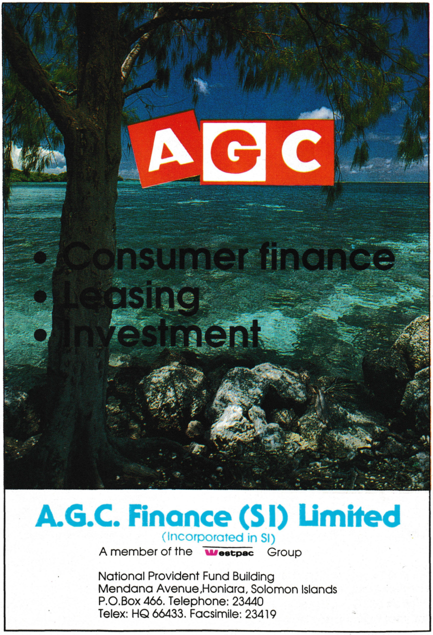
long human occupation, the Poha Cave has not been a treasure trove of artefacts. Hardly any have been found. Apart from two stone adzes and some possible trochus shell fishhooks, human occupation is demonstrated only by traces of stone ovens and the carbonised remains of cooked food, including fish and animal bone, fresh water and marine shellfish and nutshells. There are also at least four burials, two of these at or before 3000 years ago.

The history of the cave, judged by different layers of material, breaks up into five phases probably representing four major occupations. While radiocarbon dating (the measurement of the rate at which the activity of the radioactive carbon content of material has decayed) from the early excavations showed evidence of 3000 years of human use, Roe's work in 1988 uncovered deposits at the front of the cave laid down as much as 6000 years ago. "This makes the Poha Cave the oldest site in the political Solomons," says Roe," although in Buka (in the North Solomons, part of Papua New Guinea) settlement has been dated at 28,000 years. There is nothing known that is earlier in Vanuatu, New Caledonia or Fiji, although the question of very early settlement south of the Solomon Islands is still, to some extent, an open one."

One problem in establishing the place of the Poha Cave in any historic scale of human settlement is that excavation work in other parts of the Solomons is rather limited. "Unfortunately", says Roe, "the detailed information relating to Santa Cruz group of islands, where 300-year-old lapita settlements are known, is not matched in any other part of the country. The Poha Cave work, other excavations in Guadalcanal, and current archaeological investigations in the Nggela islands by Alex Rukia, of the National Museum, are important steps in filling the large gaps in our knowledge of the area's pre-history. Certainly there will be other sites as old as 3000 years, but we might also expect to find up to 25,000 years of human occupation of the Solomons."

Problems

About 15 rock art sites are known of in Guadalcanal. Records of at least another 50 in other islands of the Solomons have been located by Roe. But he says the Poha Cave "as far as I know" is the largest single gallery of rock art in island Melanesia and quite possibly the South Pacific. Only part of the cave's carvings have been recorded. "The collection is so large and the practical problems of tracing or photographing the designs so difficult, that to make a complete record would be extremely complicated and a time consuming task," he says "It is however highly desirable that such work gets done as many of the designs are endangered by natural erosion. But site recording, excavation and surveys are expensive activities and institutions like the Na-



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***Entrance** to Poha Cave*

tional Museum and Guadalcanal Cultural Centre are often hampered by a lack of funds. Anyone who is concerned for the cultural heritage of the Solomons, its recording, and preservation should seriously consider making a contribution to the National Museum, whose enthusiastic and committed staff need all the financial assistance they can get for such a massive and urgent task."

The Poha Cave can be reached quite easily by car, ending with a hike of about 20 minutes. But as the area belongs to custom landowners there is no right of public access. Since the landowners are sensitive about unannounced visitors and as the site is protected by historic sites legislation of the Guadalcanal provincial government, visitors should first contact either the national museum or the Guadalcanal Cultural Centre. They will give advice on how best to organise an expedition. This will usually mean payment to the landowners.

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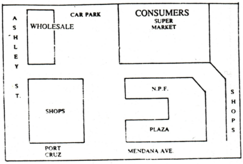
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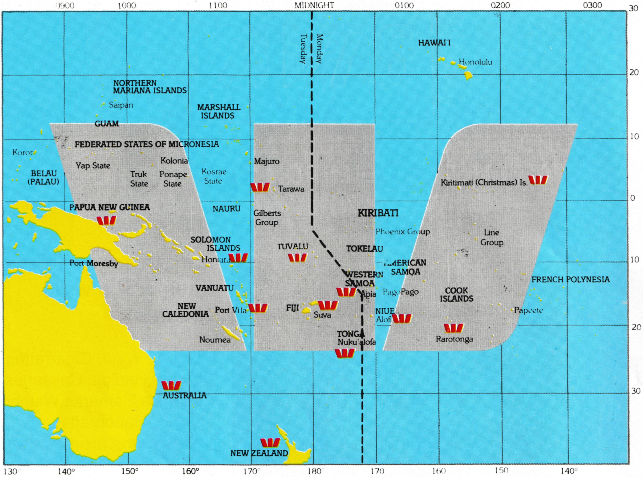
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HOME on the hill

***Forum** Fisheries Agency headquarters*

This building on the hill near Honiara is home to an international intelligence agency fighting poachers and protecting one of the region's great assets

Look up to the top of the hill on the eastern outskirts of of Honiara and you'll spot the fawn-yellow roof of what rates as being possibly the South Pacific's most important intelligence agency. That roof shelters the Forum Fisheries Agency, opened in 1979 and managed on behalf of 16 of the region's countries. As the flags of its members flap from poles outside its entrance, the people inside work with quiet intensity, rattling away at the keys of banks of computers.

An intelligence agency? But aren't they just fishing? Don't be misled. There's much more to the Forum Fisheries Agency than just fishing. Its intelligence feelers stretch out in all directions, right across the Pacific Ocean into the markets in Asia, Europe, and North America that each year consume hundreds of millions of dollars worth of tuna and other sea products. The agency is a critical centre in the fight by Pacific Island states to protect their huge tuna stocks from poaching by foreign fishing fleets, and to develop techniques for catching, canning and selling tuna themselves.

The agency means big business, international high pressure politics, and not a little intrigue. It is an international communications, analysis, and marketing centre but also the place member countries turn to for advice on a wide range of fishing matters other than tuna.

Members

Forum Fisheries Agency members: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa.

Through the agency, governments keep an eye on about 2500 foreign, mainly Asian, fishing boats licensed to fish in the 200-mile economic zones claimed around their shores by the agency's members. The zones cover more than 30-million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean's surface. Only about 500 vessels are fishing in them at any one time. But in any one year the catch, again mainly tuna, taken from the zones is never worth fewer than about $S400 million and often much more. Every day the licensed vessels are required to report their position, details of their catch and scientific data to the country in whose zone they are fishing. Flowing into the computers of the agency, these reports are building up a massive bank of data that is making the management of the tuna fishery steadily more efficient and lucrative.

The Solomon Islands is an appropriate location for the agency. Firstly, it has the South Pacific's largest and best-

Staff member at work

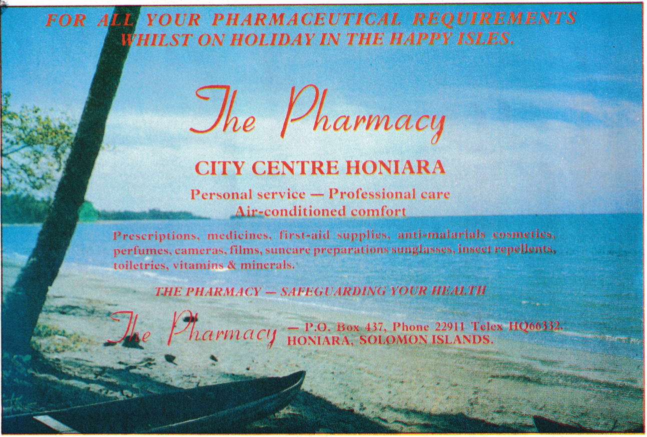
developed home-managed tuna fisheries. Secondly, it was the area of the historic *Jeanette Diana* incident. In 1985 a Solomon Islands government gunboat arrested the poaching American purse-seine fishing vessel of that name after a dramatic chase that ended with the firing of shots across the poacher's bow. When the high court in Honiara fined the *Jeanette Diana's* captain and ordered the confiscation of the ship, her catch and a helicopter used for tuna-spotting, the mighty United States imposed a trade embargo on the Solomons. Even State Department officials in Washington admitted privately this was an embarrassment since it made the United States look a little silly. Eventually the dispute was resolved and the embargo lifted. It paved the way for the 1987 signing between the United States and the agency's members of a treaty under which American vessels, including the *Jeanette Diana*, now pay fees for the rights to legally fish in Oceania's 200-mile zones.

The agency had a critical role in the two years of complex negotiations with Washington on the terms of the treaty and is the responsible for policing it. A new challenge for it now has arisen with the invasion of the South Pacific by Asian fishermen who use the destructive drift-net fishing technique. As with the dispute with the Americans, the agency must grapple at high and intricate levels with business, government and diplomatic opposition to the demand by island states for a regional ban on drift-nets.

Patrolling planes

From its hilltop headquarters, the agency keeps tabs on foreign fishermen. It uses a combination of reports from member countries, patrolling Australian and New Zealand air force planes, and diplomatic, political, commercial and technical data gathered around the world by its own representatives and from news media and other sources.

In its early days the agency had a budget of only $S234,000. This has grown to more than $S1.9 million, of which only about 12 percent is paid by members. The other money comes from international donors who regard the



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agency as being one of the most successful regional institutions in the world. Phillip Muller, a Western Samoan, as director leads the about 40 professional, administrative, and secretarial staff. He believes the agency's success is due to its "small non-bureaucratic nature, its ability to attract professional staff of the highest calibre, its single clear mandate from the South Pacific Forum and its guiding philosophy — to respond to the needs of member countries as speedily and fully as possible."

***Director** Phillip Muller*

About 60 percent of its work is concerned with tuna matters, he says. Increasingly, more attention is being given to the wise exploitation of reef and lagoon fisheries, the management and marketing of other marine products, including shellfish, beche-de-mer, and crayfish, and the feasibility of marine-product processing propositions. But tuna is likely to remain the dominating part of the agency's work. Market forces are pressing Japanese and American fishermen to make a gradual withdrawal from the region, but such newcomers as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines are preparing to move in. ■

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The resort is 45 kms west of Honiara at the western tip of Guadalcanal Island set in gardens beside a sheltered beach and is partly owned by villagers who live in nearby Tambea.

Tambea consists of 24 Melanesian-style bungalows set among palms around the sheltered cove. The bungalows are large, cool and airy and all have enclosed toilet facilities with the necessary fixtures. The dining hall, built chalet style, can accommodate up to 50 diners. It also includes an area for dancing and singing.

Horse riding, bush walking, fishing, scuba diving or just paddling an outrigger canoe at sunset are some of the attractions.

Moreover, Tambea overlooks Savo Island, a sleeping volcano shrouded in jungle. Between them is a stretch of water, deceptively calm which is officially known as Savo Straights. But to naval men, it is Ironbottom Sound, the graveyard of no fewer than 50 capital fighting ships and their thousands of American, Australian and Japanese Crew.

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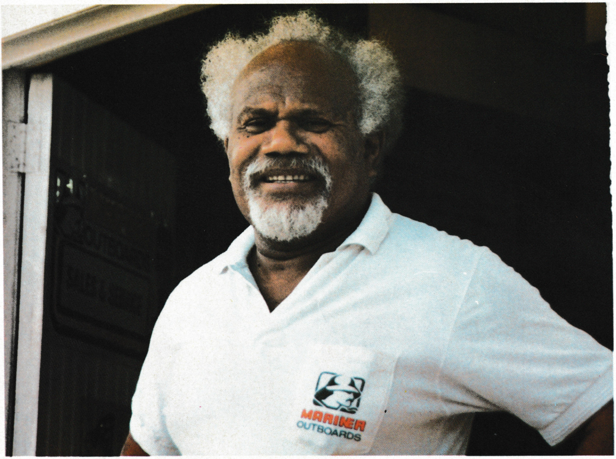

Outside *his business in Honiara: David Kausimae*

Man of the world

Whether he's running his modern business or upholding traditions of his people, David Kausimae leads by example

David Kausimae has become a man of three worlds: the world of custom, the world of business, and the world of modern politics and public service. At the age of 58, the calm, stocky, white-haired man of the island of Malaita is one of the most successful indigenous Solomon Islands businessmen. He runs a company with a turnover any company manager would envy. Yet he estimates he spends nearly half his time in his traditional role as chief of the AreAre district of Malaita, about the same time as a leader of the People's Alliance Party, and many hours as chairman or member of important statutory organisations.

It wasn't until he was about 14 or 15, he recalls, that he got to a small village school to learn to read and write. That was the time when the Pacific war between Japan and the western allies was ending. From the coast of Malaita, as a boy he heard the rumble of gunfire as warships pounded each other off the coast of Guadalcanal. He saw the probing fingers of searchlights and two planes falling in flames from the sky. That was all the war meant to the people of northern Malaita, but that was quite enough.

He began working with the forestry department in the 1950s. In 1958 he

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returned from Honiara to Malaita, where he became a revenue collector for the provincial council, a court clerk and eventually, in 1965, one of the island's elected members of the old Solomons colonial legislative council. Five years later, with the adoption of a new constitution designed to give the then British protectorate more self-government, he was appointed by the British high commissioner to be minister for natural resources, commerce, and industry. His political bent was no surprise since his grandfather, Alick Eresau, was leader of the Maasina Ruru (brothers together) movement. This, for several years after the war, fomented opposition to the colonial administration by organising plantation workers to refuse to pay tax, and other forms of resistance.

It was young Kausimae's record of community and government service that brought him the position of chief of about 14,000 people in the AreAre district. "In Polynesian societies the chiefs are hereditary," he said. "The people support their chief with food, housing and money. In Melanesian society it's not like that. A chief has to help his people in the way of buying women, contributing to bride price and custom feasts. That is the obligation. We have three types of chiefly systems in Are-Are, and I come from the third one. It is not that I am the eldest. If I am popular with the people, if I am respected in the community, then I will become a chief. If I am not then it will be the second son, or the third or fourth. There are two roles for a chief. One is to settle any dispute — not to give judgement but settlement. It may be a land dispute, a social dispute between two individuals or two groups. The other role is leadership."

His years as a government minister were of great satisfaction to him. His natural resources portfolio gave him a role in the launching of two of the country's most important industries, tuna

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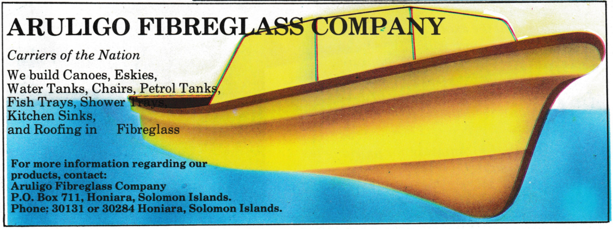
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> 'I told my people that business was different'

fishing and canning, and oil palm. He was also involved in efforts to establish two not so successful endeavours, rice farming and cattle raising.

Government minister

In 1975, with independence for the Solomon Islands set for the following year, he reflected on his future and wondered if he dare continue to rely on politics for his livelihood. It was general election time and he couldn't be sure of winning a seat in the new parliament. "I realised that I couldn't always be an MP, that those privileges would be gone. A person like myself, I thought to myself, with no formal education — no one will accept me. They only invite me to a party and to their house not because of David Kausimae but because of my position. And it was true. So I said I must do something."

His solution was to become a businessman and his help in doing that came from Brian Derrick, a Fiji businessman whose hotel company built the Mendana Hotel and invested in other Honiara ventures. "He asked me to be a director of Solomon company and from then on I learnt to make business decisions. He was always talking to us about business, how to run one. Capital; market; know-how."

Kausimae's new know-how led him to the purchase of Masima Enterprises, a general store whose Chinese proprietors put up a guarantee for the $S25,000 bank loan he began business with. Today the nature of the business has changed., as has its name, now South Pacific Distributors, located a few kilometres from town on the airport side. It sells and services nearly half the outboard engines used in the Solomon Islands and a lot of the chainsaws. The Kausimae business empire, run day-to-day now mainly by son Mathew, includes a motor service station, a 62ft cargo ship, shares in a hotel, and residential properties rented to some of the biggest names in town. "It was very difficult starting up," recalled David Kausimae. "In those days they didn't want to see a Solomon Islander in business and be a success. For a month there was no turnover. It was traumatic. I worked from 7.30am to 10pm and I wouldn't employ anyone from Malaita because I didn't trust wantok."

Customary pressures

The difficulty was in resisting customary pressures. "I told my people that business was different. I can't pay you money because I have to pay my suppliers and repay a loan. I told them I had no money and that I was on the payroll, I am not just taking money. That's what I told them and a most of them didn't believe me. A few educated ones did."

Kausimae doesn't try to hold himself up as a person younger people should emulate. With his background — just a village boy who got to school very late — he's not sure he should do that. "I think we have achieved something in the last 10 years of independence," he said. "But if more people in the government had a better understanding of business we would be much better off now. We've got a lot of clever young people, but they are not being well utilised. What's lacking is people with good degrees in economics. We have teachers and lawyers but not middle management." ■

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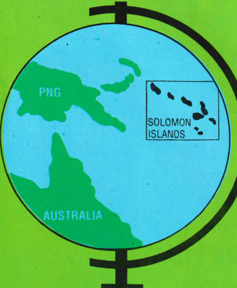

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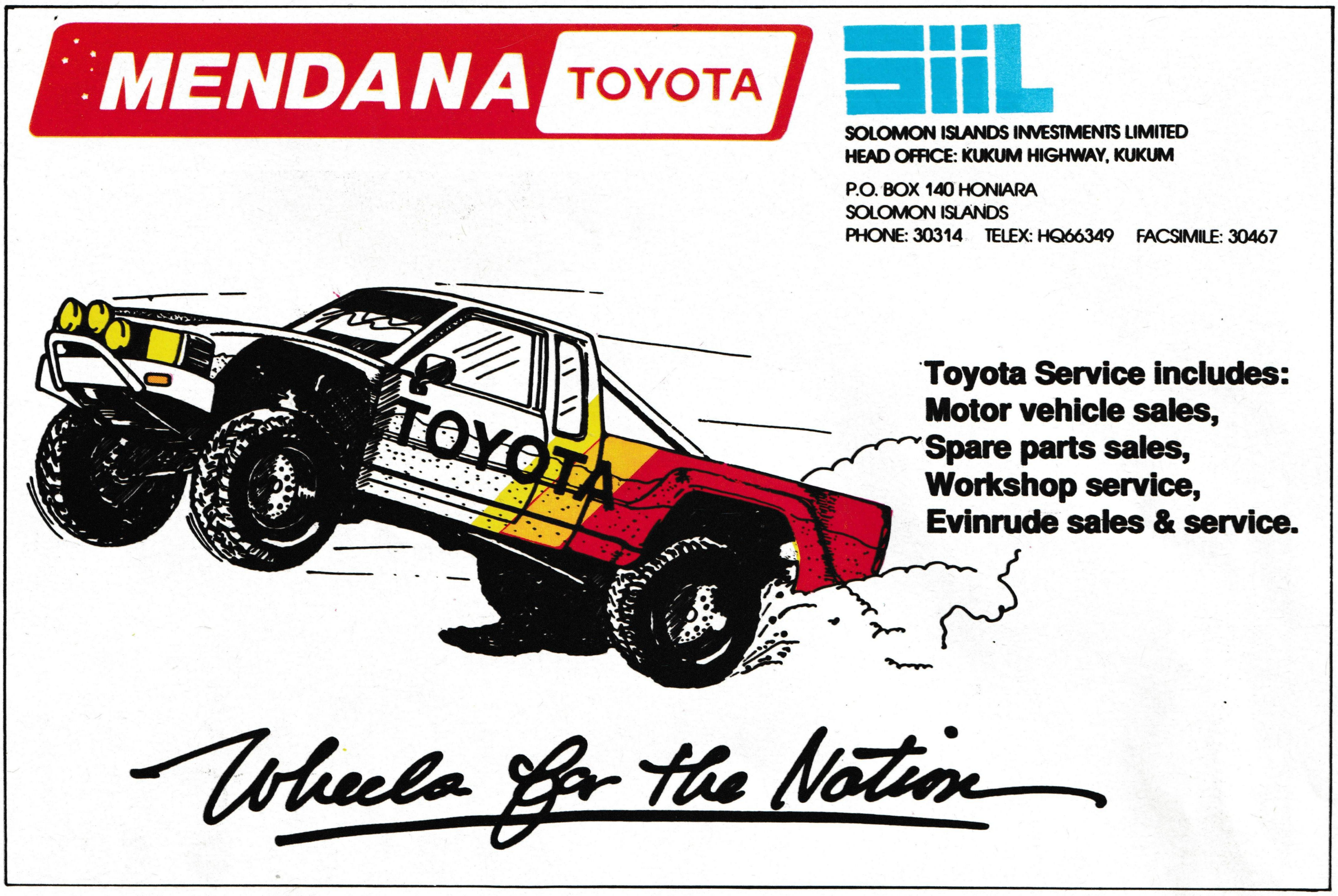

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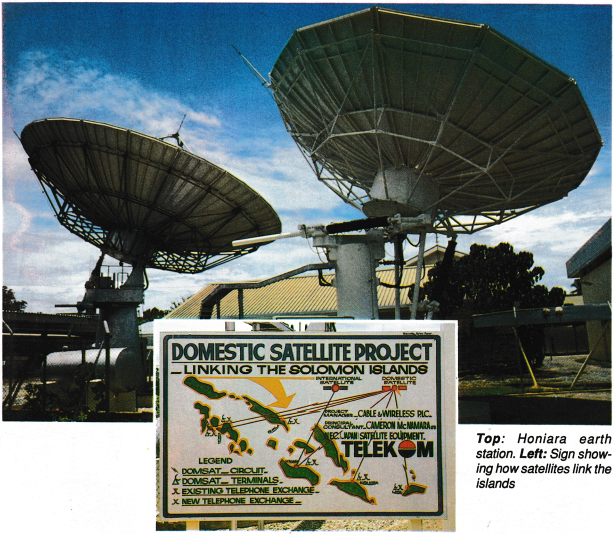
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***Top:** Honiara earth station. **Left:** Sign showing how satellites link the islands*

Space links

For Kirakira, Gizo, Noro, Lata, Buala

Hullo, Honiara. Kirakira calling! And Gizo, Noro, Lata, and Buala too. Since October those calls have been swiftly put through with crystal-clear quality, all bounced through a satellite parked 23,000 miles out in space over the Solomon Islands. Space-age communications have been brought to the country's local telephone service through a $S10.5 million investment by Solomon Telekom.

They were switched on formally by Posts and Communications minister Gale Fa'aitoa at a ceremony at the Honiara telephone exchange on October 24, though they had been working informally for testing purposes for four weeks before. Now a call from Kirakira, or any of the four other outstations, is shot into space from a six-metre wide dish-shaped antenna aimed at a satellite in above Earth on the longitude 177 degrees East. It is then fired back to a ground station on the island the caller wants to reach, to emerge from the telephone held by the person being called. If an outstation caller wants to make an international call, then this will be shot to the DOMSAT satellite, as it is called, back to the Honiara exchange and then out again from a 7.6-metre dish antenna at Honiara for relay to its destination in Australia, New Zealand, Britain or wherever. This goes via the INTELSAT communications satellite stationed quite close to DOMSAT, at 174 degrees East.

The DOMSAT system has replaced a high-frequency radio network which had become overloaded. The switching of calls is controlled at Honiara by what is known as DAMA, the cost-saving Demand Assigned Multiple Access system. This gives the Telekom network access to the relay satellite only for as long as calls are being made, eliminating costly dead time. When a call is made a pair of satellite channels are "demanded" from a pool of channels. When the call is completed the channels are returned to the pool. All stations have access and may make demands simultaneously. DAMA is especially suitable for services having a relatively small amount of telephone traffic. But Telekom's general manager, Reg Smith, expects that the quality of the service will produce a spurt of business.

Take the Lata outstation, for instance, which at present isn't doing enough business to justify its cost. "Lata may become commercial eventually," he said. "Once you put a phone in place it is always a surprise to see what business actually follows." The arrival of the DAMA system is a boon for the Honiara headquarters of banks which have branches in the Western Province capital of Gizo. Previously they had to conduct transactions by radio. Now they can have a direct computer link. For Solomon Airlines, it has meant it can put in reservations computers.

TELEKOM has about 3000 telephone subscribers, about 2500 in Honiara. Off Guadalcanal, telephones are still relatively few. Most villagers still need to walk, perhaps many miles, to the telephone exchange on their island if they want to phone someone on another island, or overseas through the DAMA system. Mr Smith said TELEKOM's aim was to place a phone within easy walking distance of every Solomon Islander. But this would take many years to accomplish because of the scattered islands and relatively large population of more than 300,000. Cost would be a barrier, he explained "because in some villages there would be only 50 people for one phone." The future of rural telephone communications will probably take the form of radio-telephone services, such as those being installed by island resort hotels, being provided for clusters of villages. These will be able to relay calls through the DAMA network.

TELEKOM has had two technicians training with the Japanese company NEC, which supplied most of the equipment. Others are being trained locally by installation engineers. Project manager Trevor Norris said the main problem in putting the DAMA system in place had been the logistics of shipping tons of components to five widely-scattered locations. But everything had gone surprisingly well. "We were worried about the heavy rain here, which is the heaviest I've experienced," he said. "KiraKira was a special worry because we had three rivers to cross. But as soon soon as the earth stations arrived the rain stopped."

The earth stations, including the dishes, are designed to withstand hurricanes and work for at least 20 years. If a component fails another will automatically take over. A technician looks after each outstation. If a generator fails batteries will supply emergency power for eight hours. TELEKOM is a joint venture company 60 percent owned by the Solomon Islands Government and 40 percent by Britain's Cable and Wireless group. Since January 1989 it has managed all the country's local and overseas communications services, with the British company supplying staff and technical support. ■

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